



Estrella-El Pomar-Creston Water District (EPCWD)
Estrella-El Pomar-Creston Groundwater Sustainability Agency (EPCGSA)

Regular Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, February 12, 2025

Windfall Farms Conference Room, 4710 Flying Paster Lane, Paso Robles

ITEM 1: CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

The meeting was called to order at 3:00PM by Dana Merrill.

Directors Roll Call:

Dana Merrill – present
Lee Nesbitt - present
Jerry Reaugh – present
Hilary Graves – present
Ryan Scott - present

Others present: Guests (in person and by teleconference)

ITEM 2: REVIEW AND APPROVE MINUTES OF JANUARY 8, JANUARY 15, AND JANUARY 30 MEETINGS

MOTION TO APPROVE JANUARY 8, JANUARY 15 AND JANUARY 30, 2025 MEETING MINUTES made by Jerry Reaugh, seconded by Lee Nesbitt, voice vote, motion passed 5-0.

ITEM 3: PUBLIC COMMENT

No public comment was presented.

ITEMS 4 and 5: REVIEW JOINT POWERS AGREEMENT PROCESS AND SLO COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS MEETING FEBRUARY 4, 2025; CONSIDER FOR APPROVAL THE DRAFT JOINT POWERS AUTHORITY 4-PARTY AND 5-PARTY AGREEMENTS DATED FEBRUARY 3, 2025

Jerry Reaugh recapped the JPA process over the last three to four weeks, culminating with a description of the versions to be considered at today's meeting, without the EPCWD-suggested language in Section 6.8, and with the updated items to be included in the 4/5 voting requirement. The SLO County Board of Supervisors considered and approved both versions at their February 4, 2025 meeting. The question next discussed is whether the adjustments/concessions included in the current version are adequate to address the EPCWD's concerns. Hilary Graves suggested that the alternative path of "going it on our own" might provide an opportunity for management that would be less expensive, more responsive, and more nimble. Alan Doud (counsel for the District) has indicated withdrawing from the JPA is possible if it is not a good fit; any financial responsibilities agreed to while part of the JPA would continue even if the District were to exit the Agreement. Hilary Graves also questioned what would happen if a Prop 218 did not pass and the answer was that we would be back to "ground zero." If EPCWD and/or SSJWD were to go it alone, it would not be necessary to have their own GSP, but a cooperating agreement with the other GSAs would be necessary. Dana Merrill expressed an interest in trying to make the JPA a success. The discussion turned to the powers of an executive director with flexibility in decision making important so that the process stays efficient, but with oversight by the JPA Board. Guest Murray Powell asked if Blaine Reely (current Director of Groundwater Sustainability for SLO County)

could take the Executive Director position; Blaine has indicated in the past that he would not be a candidate for the position. The discussion turned to the potential JPA budget, with Jerry Reaugh explaining that the Rate Study will develop the upper spending limit, and the real budget dictating the eventual fees. Randy Diffenbaugh brought up the history of the early attempt to form a water district over the entire Basin, followed by the formation of the SSJWD and EPCWD to avoid handing the decision-making process over to the County. Does the JPA acknowledge the fact that the two Districts will be paying the bulk of the fees?

MOTION TO APPROVE THE DRAFT JOINT POWERS AUTHORITY 4-PARTY AGREEMENT TO BE EFFECTIVE ONCE ALL OTHER PARTIES HAVE APPROVED made by Jerry Reaugh, seconded by Hilary Graves, roll call vote:

Dana Merrill – yes
Hilary Graves – yes
Jerry Reaugh – yes
Ryan Scott – yes
Lee Nesbitt – yes
Motion passed 5-0

Discussion regarding the 5-Party agreement continued, with Hilary Graves asking to confer with SSJWD to see their view of the agreement. Public engagement in the JPA process has been limited because, while the Districts have been communicating along the way with their constituents, the County GSA has only had the Town Hall meeting as specific outreach to the “White Area” constituents, and it covered multiple topics in addition to the JPA. The consensus of this meeting attendees was to try the JPA and go our own way if it doesn’t proceed per expectations.

MOTION TO APPROVE THE DRAFT JOINT POWERS AUTHORITY 5-PARTY AGREEMENT TO BE EFFECTIVE ONCE ALL OTHER PARTIES HAVE APPROVED made by Dana Merrill, seconded by Jerry Reaugh, roll call vote:

Lee Nesbitt – no
Dana Merrill – yes
Ryan Scott – no
Jerry Reaugh – yes
Hilary Graves - no
Motion failed 2-3

ITEM 5: DISCUSS AND CONSIDER RECOMMENDATIONS ON PROPOSED JAP GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE

Jerry Reaugh reported that the December 16, 2024 version of the JPA has been publicly distributed. A proposed 4/5 voting structure was proposed and the returned version includes a 3/5 structure, with 4/5 required such items as: budget approval and amendments to the budget over \$200,000; decisions related to imposition of mandatory limitations on groundwater extractions; and decisions related to Member contributions to cover any budgeted costs not covered by extraction fees. Counsel for the District, Alan Doud joined the discussion and answered various questions including how other GSAs are handling this – his example was Cuyama uses a weighted vote. The concept that EPCWD and Shandon-San Juan WD will be responsible for the bulk of the fees and whether that supports a voting structure that acknowledges that was discussed.

ITEM 6: UPDATE ITEMS

a. WRAC meeting February 5, 2025

Lee Nesbitt reported that there was a discussion of desalination locations. The County is working on a feasibility study

b. Paso Basin Cooperative Committee

1) PBCC meeting January 22, 2025

While the special language suggested by EPCWD for the JPA voting structure was included in the version considered by the PBCC at the meeting, it was not discussed or considered.

2) Multi-Benefit Irrigated Land Repurposing (MILR) Program

The Program is being reconstituted to take advantage of LandIQ to look at fallowing and Basin management, with a report to follow.

3) Blended Water Project

Due to PFA levels in the Paso Robles recycled water and the City’s concern about liability, this project is being shelved. The City has offered to help with hooking up to the Nacimiento Pipeline as an alternative.

4) PBCC upcoming meetings March 26, May 28, July 23, September 24, and November 19, 2025

The Rate Study will have to be complete by the end of April in order to have time to have a Prop 218 vote and fees in place in time for the tax rolls for 2025. The JPA is the pivot point for this to occur.

ITEM 7: TREASURER’S REPORT

No discussion.

ITEM 8: NEW BUSINESS

Hilary Graves proposed a light agenda for the regular meeting on March 12 with the primary focus being on the 5-party JPA agreement. The newsletter was distributed on February 11.

ITEM 11: NEXT MEETING – MARCH 12, 2025

ITEM 12: ADJOURNMENT

MOTION TO ADJOURN made by Dana Merrill, seconded by Jerry Reaugh voice vote, motion passed 5-0.
Meeting adjourned at 4:39PM

Respectfully submitted,

Jerry Reaugh, Secretary/Treasurer

Accepted:

Dana Merrill, President

Date